



*With the Compliments of the author
W. Cabell Bruce.*

THE NEGRO PROBLEM.

BY W. CABELL BRUCE.

BALTIMORE:
JOHN MURPHY & CO.
1891.

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THE NEGRO PROBLEM.

From first to last it should be borne in mind that the Negro Problem is a race problem. It is true that the great mass of the Southern negroes vote republican ballots. This, however, is not because they have any definite convictions upon questions of public policy, nor yet, except to a limited extent, because it was the Republican party that conferred upon them freedom and the franchise, and that to-day affects to be their one champion and guardian. Their intellectual condition renders the first idea ludicrous. The second is largely shorn of its claims to consideration by the fact that enough negroes have resided at the North to fully enlighten their race at the South as to how far white Republicans in the former section are disposed to fraternize with the African in all the personal and business relations of life. When to correct information in this respect is added the begrudging spirit in which a few petty offices are awarded to the Southern negro as his part of the spoil of a presidential election, it is hard to see how the emotions excited in him by the Emancipation Proclamation, the post-bellum Amendments to the Federal Constitution and the present professions of the Republican party could be otherwise than considerably cooled.

The Southern negro votes a republican ballot because it is the race prejudices of the Southern whites, which he heartily reciprocates, and not the race prejudices of the Northern whites, that bear directly upon his daily life,

and because he knows that the Republican party is still numerously composed of partisans whose feelings towards the Southern whites are such that they would not hesitate to use even him as an agency for their degradation. If by some process of transposition all the Southern whites could be removed to the North, and all the Northern whites to the South, only a few years of race friction would suffice to foster a political antagonism between the latter and the negro, as marked as that which now exists between the former and him.

The problem then is a race problem. Whatever gratitude the negro might feel for the political privileges, conferred upon him by the Republican party, he would be an even more highly organized individual than the white man, if he were capable of soothing the smart of the social and political proscription at the North, which excludes him from schools, hotels, places of amusement, positions of public trust and private employments other than menial, with memories of historical favors, of which he is as a rule so ignorant that, when the test was made at a recent banquet in a Northern city, it is said that not one of the negro waiters present was found to know who William Lloyd Garrison was.

Side by side, or rather face to face at the South, there are two races, of all the members of the human family the most widely separated by salient and ineffaceable physical distinctions, and to all appearances by moral and intellectual distinctions equally as salient and ineffaceable.

Let us contrast these races.

And first as to the physical distinctions between them. Surely, never were such distinctions more acutely accentuated. It is hard to see how a person can remember the inveterate aversion, which has sprung from race peculiarities not so pronounced, such for instance as those that keep the Englishman and the East Indian or the American and the Mongolian sullenly apart, even when brought into the closest contiguity in point of space, and yet fail to recognize in the wooly hair,

the receding forehead, the flat nose, the thick lips and the protruding jaw of the negro, not to speak of the paramount incompatibility of color, personal attributes exquisitely calculated to disgust prepossessions based upon their exact opposites.

To this statement it will, of course, be replied that, if the only lines of separation between the negro and the white man are physical, such prepossessions are capricious merely and should not be countenanced by the enlightened spirit of to-day. And ten to one the reply will emanate from some Republican editor or politician who would have heaped the bitterest reproaches upon the South, if her representatives had not helped to arrest the tide of Mongolian emigration, that was creeping over the face of the Pacific coast, and was stayed only when the stern common sense of self preservation indignantly trampled under foot every appeal of false sentiment and false philosophy. But the argument begs the question. Man is a creature of prejudice as well as of reason, and no government is conducted in the spirit of true statesmanship that does not take deeply ingrained prejudice into account. Omission in this regard is chargeable with one half of the irritation that always follows when one community undertakes to do the thinking or the want of thinking of another. More and more the tendency in modern times, especially since the reign of the abstractions, that conspire to swell the warnings of the French Revolution, has been to regard Government as a practical science that should seek to accommodate itself not only to the virtues but the weaknesses of the human beings upon which it operates. As well might a tailor attempt to frame a coat without reference to the defects of the structure, for which it is intended, as a Legislature to frame laws without reference to the social predilections and antipathies of its constituents, however unjust or even whimsical some of these predilections or antipathies might appear to an outsider to be.

But the lines of separation between the negro and the white man are far from being purely physical. Even if the personal characteristics, to which we have alluded, were want-

ing, his origin, his history, his present condition and moral and intellectual idiosyncrasies of his would still impart to his individuality an invidious relief.

From the dawn of recorded time, from the period, when his captive form was delineated upon the commemorative walls of ancient Egypt, until the present day, he has been the slave of a will other than his own, or, when not the slave of a will other than his own, the slave of what is even worse—of his own unilluminated and misguided will. Of all the teeming millions, that people the Dark Continent, not one of its innumerable tribes has ever succeeded in elevating itself to a level that even the more advanced of the Asiatic nations would call civilization. Indeed, so sunk in savagery and superstition is this vast continent that, without a perceptible shock to the conscience of the world, six or seven of the Great Powers of Europe have partitioned its entire surface between them with as little regard to the inclinations of the natives themselves as if the latter were so many rabbits in a warren. So too, when any portion of the African race has been enslaved by the Caucasian, and, through the harsh discipline of slavery, has been lifted to a higher than its aboriginal estate, it has never been endowed with self-control except to its discredit. These are hard words. They are written entirely without an intention to claim that the conclusions of the future can always be safely deduced from the premises of the past. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that they are justified by the facts and should therefore be allowed their full force in shaping the spirit, in which the Negro Problem should be approached. Froude, certainly an intelligent observer, has just warned Great Britain, after a tour of her possessions in the West Indies, that a more liberal extension of political power to the blacks in those islands would probably terminate in as many fac-similes of Hayti. What this means we are at no loss to determine. Another highly intelligent Englishman, Sir Spenser St. John, who resided for years as British Minister

at Port-au-Prince, had, a short while before, expressed in a singularly interesting book, *Hayti, or the Black Republic*, which should be in the hands of every public man in the United States, his conviction that, in spite of her unsurpassed natural resources, in spite of the ready-made industrial, political and ecclesiastical organizations, to which she fell heir, when the French were expelled from the island, in spite of her long term of self-rule, Hayti, already the seat of chronic speculation and carnage, was steadily returning to serpent worship and cannibalism. The same view of Hayti was presented by the various correspondents of our great American dailies,¹ who wrote from the island during the periodic revolution of last year. It is also sustained by the testimony of an official successor of Sir Spenser St. John.²

Other examples can be readily adduced. A negro, Charles H. I. Taylor, appointed Minister to Liberia by President Cleveland, threw up his mission in disgust, and came home to declare in a paper, which appeared in the *Kansas City Times* on April 22, 1888, that the Republic, founded and upheld by the generous patronage of our country, had arrived at the lowest point of disorganization and decay. It is well known that Congress was compelled to withdraw the privilege of self-government from the District of Columbia, as England had been compelled to withdraw it from Jamaica, because of the degree to which its value was impaired by the associated evils of negro suffrage. Contrasted, however, with the fate, that befell the Southern States, after the close of the Civil War, these illustrations assume but a secondary significance. As long as they retain the recollection of anything, the people of those States will not forget the odious and maddening crisis in their affairs when the liberated slave, the scalawag and the cast-off vagabond of other communities joined hands for the purpose of insulting and despoiling

¹ See for instance the *Baltimore Sun*, January 8, 1889 and April 5, 1890.

² *Richmond Times*, March 13, 1890.

them, and their offices became instruments of plunder far more efficacious than the sword itself had been, and unblushing knavery and corruption culminated in tax rates high enough to be little less than the equivalents of confiscation and yet not high enough to save the public credit from utter shame, and the high places of justice were befouled, and parliaments, once the seats of eloquence and deliberative wisdom, resounded with the rude gibberish of a council fire in the bush, and ancient and illustrious commonwealths trod the lowest abysses of humiliation and disgrace.

With the exception of the negro, all the elements that enter into the population of the United States came here. The negro was brought here. Captured by his own kith and kin in Africa, sold by his captors to the slave dealers, sold by the slave dealers to the slaveship, transported by the slaveship to our shores, he was, from the colonial period until the momentous day, that struck off his fetters, as much a chattel as the plough or the hoe that he handled. Never did any race in the annals of human existence bow its neck so tamely to the yoke or show such little tenacity of fibre in resisting the influences of new surroundings. He not only learnt to wear his chains with docility but with light-hearted carelessness. He not only ceased to cherish every usage and institution of his mother country, but surpassed all other races, of which there is any record, in the ready imitativeness with which he adopted the usages and institutions of his masters. More than a century passed away, and yet scarcely in a solitary instance did the noble instinct of self-assertion, that has at times spurred the heart of every other slave into desperation, move him. A direful war supervened between his owners and their foes, of which he himself was at least indirectly the occasion, and yet, though it afforded him every opportunity to strike a successful blow for his liberty, he, as a general thing, pursued the ordinary routine of his servile tasks as if he had no stake in the contest. Many and most touching proofs of fidelity and devotion to master and family did he exhibit during this time, as has

again and again been gratefully acknowledged in word and deed by those who received them, but these credits belong to his account as a bondsman and not as a citizen.

Such a slave as this was doubly a slave. Hurried from chattelism into citizenship, utterly without any sort of probationary training for its duties, he, of course, still bore in the latter state all the badges of the moral and intellectual debasement that had characterized him in the former. Here and there in the larger cities of the country, where he is brought into immediate contact with the civilization of the white race, he has made some advance towards the acquisition of education and property, but in the rural communities at the South, through which the great mass of his race is diffused, he is, in point of moral and mental enlightenment, substantially what he was before emancipation. A widespread belief in conjury, common even to domestic servants, who have spent the greater part of their lives under the roofs of white persons, morbid superstitions fermenting beneath a thin film of religious forms, an almost unbridled licentiousness in the intercourse of the sexes, a venality at the polls absolutely unqualified by any principle short of hostility to the whites, an improvidence that wastes in a day on luxuries the earnings of a week or a month, a childish elevation of spirits that assumes a more sober cast only when some chord of sensual desire, or furtive hatred or indefinable fear is touched; all testify to an observer in the heart of a country neighborhood in the Southern States how slightly in every fundamental respect the nature of the negro has been altered since he went to bed a slave and awoke with a ballot in his hand.

Persistently it is always assumed by honest and dishonest partisans at the North that the negro is simply a white man with a black skin. The assumption is in no instance founded upon anything better than a total want of practical familiarity with his temperament and character. It is impossible to say in what ratio his present deficiencies are to be apportioned between the circumstances of his past and innate shortcomings.

But this we can say. Though he has now been a freeman for a quarter of a century, though the South in that time has applied a most generous share of her state revenues towards his education, and Northern philanthropy has accepted him as a standing charge upon its liberality, his position in the scale of human progress has not materially changed. His faculties betray the same immaturity and incapacity to anticipate the future. His moral and religious perceptions still grope in the twilight. Brought from sunrise to sunset into companionship with the sublime phenomena of nature, where, in his case, are to be found the rude but stirring strains of poetry and eloquence that this companionship has evoked from every gifted race in its infancy. Vested with citizenship, stamped with indelible tokens as a distinct individual, who should be impelled by the strongest motives of self-interest and race emulation to improve the condition of his people, when has he ever evinced an aptitude for public affairs? Living in vicinities, where land can be purchased for a few dollars an acre, what proportion of the Southern soil has he acquired? Laboring as a farm hand in thousands of open fields and as an operative in hundreds of tobacco and cotton factories, how many patents for improvements in agricultural or manufacturing machinery has his inventive genius ever secured? It is in no intemperate spirit that these questions are asked. A more distasteful duty cannot be devolved upon a man and a gentleman than that of laying bare the infirmities of a race, which was not brought into contact with him of its own free will, and that, whatever may be its inherent imperfections, has never enjoyed, and, in association with the white race, will never enjoy, that full equality of opportunity which is granted to every white man. Indeed, if the *entente cordiale* between the Southern whites and the Southern blacks, that is absolutely necessary to the progress of the latter, has been rendered impossible, the blame must largely rest upon the selfish third parties to the relation, who are tireless in condemning foreign intrusion into the domestic affairs of the Irish, but

are equally tireless in their insidious efforts to adjust the domestic affairs of the South without reference to the views of the dominant race there, as to the appalling issues that turn upon the manner in which the adjustment is effected. Towards the negro, individually, the Southern whites often entertain the kindest feelings. He has his good qualities. Under the oversight of the people, who know all the limitations on his character, he is in many respects a highly efficient laborer, and personally he is far from being destitute of amiable characteristics. That the Southern whites are not wholly lacking in the disposition to pave his path to a higher position than he now occupies, when he is fitted for it, is demonstrated in the enormous sacrifices in the way of taxation for educational purposes that they have made and are still making to fit him for it. But towards the negro, collectively, their attitude under existing conditions could not fail to be indicative of the profoundest apprehension. No matter what the negro is capable of becoming, or may become, not wilder or guiltier was the phantasy that man can hold property in man than the phantasy that the negro, as he is to-day, is the equal of the white man and has as much right to political supremacy as he. A Northern emigrant never comes South, and buys a plantation, and acts upon that idea that he does not introduce hopeless demoralization into his operations. The long experience, which is the parent of all wise conduct, has taught the Southern whites better. Not only does their superior knowledge of negro nature lead them in some of their relations with him to tighten their grasp, but in as many more to relax it. They know that a negro man may not hesitate to rob a cornhouse or a smokehouse and yet be a diligent and, in other respects, a faithful hand. They know that a negro woman may be devoid of the rudimentary instincts of chastity and yet be a valuable domestic. The consequence is that there never was a more unjust charge than the one, so confidently pressed by writers like Cable, that the penalties of the criminal law are inflicted by them in a harsher spirit upon the negro than upon themselves. The very reverse

is true. Except in the case of *one* heinous offence, in its administration, they make the most indulgent allowances for the weaknesses of the negro, and too often decline to put it into motion at all in cases in which it would be sternly applied to a white criminal, and this upon the tacitly conceded ground that the negro, like the Utopia of Cuckoldom, of which Charles Lamb speaks in his comments upon the comic dramatists of the Restoration, is not justly amenable to ordinary moral laws. Only a short time since, a negro in Virginia, known to the writer, was detected in the theft of several hogs. The next day, after a reprimand, he was at work as usual in the enclosure about the house of his employer. Many other instances of the same sort might readily be cited from the personal observation of the writer alone.

In bringing our remarks in this connection to a close, it may be added that not only have the great majority of the Southern negroes failed to make any notable headway since the Civil War, but in some important particulars have distinctly retrograded. This much at least may be said for slavery. By subjecting the will of the negro to the will of a master, who was constrained by a sense of pecuniary interest and, on the whole, by a sense of moral accountability too, to consult the best welfare of his slave, it disciplined him into habits of moderation and self-restraint. The salutary effects of this discipline are apparent in the fact that such property, as has been acquired by the negro in recent years, has been acquired almost exclusively by former slaves. When slavery ceased, it ceased and nothing so far has arisen to take its place. It is the "new issue," that has never known its influence, which is recognized by the older generation of negroes themselves as most notoriously wanting in all the characteristics that constitute thrifty or useful citizens. Unaccustomed to personal responsibility for a violation of duty, and too benighted to grasp such a refinement as the moral obligation of a contract, they are faithless in their engagements to a degree that often seriously embarrasses their employers. Not being obliged as

their fathers were to surround cohabitation with the sanctions of marriage, they are progressively dispensing with the latter and finding an outlet for their sensual impulses in casual libertinism, or at best in temporary arrangements that rarely survive the first strong temptation to escape from their trammels. Saucy, vagrant, improvident, without self-restraint, and subject to no external discipline, that could supply its place, if they were the only types of their race, it would have been difficult indeed for the genius of Thomas Nelson Page or Irwin Russell to have discovered a single tint of romance in the composition of the negro.

And how could it be otherwise? So long as slavery lasted, the master was free to tolerate a considerable latitude of personal intercourse between himself and his slaves; for no individual familiarity or indulgence could possibly efface the line of deep demarcation that the law had prescribed. With the termination of slavery, however, and the mad legislative attempt to shuffle up the blacks and the whites together, it became impossible for the whites to allow themselves the same liberty without running the risk of having their race susceptibilities irritated in many different modes. On the other hand, the blacks, endowed with full political equality, have naturally become less and less disposed to accept personal intercourse with the whites on any terms that do not recognize their full social equality also. The first result is that the two races have steadily drifted further and further from each other, and the second that the one, already lamentably ill supplied with capacity for self-improvement, has been left more unreservedly than ever to the free play of its own untutored and degrading tendencies.

This growing separation is manifesting itself in the very physical aspect of the negro. It is impossible to defend the illicit commerce between white men and negro women, that has so palpably qualified the strict African type, but it is undeniable that one of the effects of this commerce was to enhance the intellectual capabilities of the lower race by pro-

ducing cross products superior to the unqualified African. However delusive race theories may be, it is certainly a most suggestive fact that the majority of the few negroes, who have attained prominence, have belonged to the shades intermediate between the white race and the pure blooded black. Every remove from the latter involves a distinct gain in intelligence and vivacity. One of the most cogent causes of the rapid pace, at which Hayti is reverting to barbarism, is the jealousy with which the lighter section of its population is regarded by the darker. The negro leaders of the Reconstruction Period were principally men of color. It is a matter of every day occurrence that, in all the employments, open to the negro, that call for the exercise of something more than mere muscular vigor, the preference is given to the mulatto. Indeed, the negro himself recognizes that the various gradations of his color carry along with them corresponding gradations of intellect. Put, says a curious saying of the Haytians, a white man, a mulatto and a black man in prison, and the first demands paper and ink to draw up a protest, the second casts about for means to escape, and the third falls asleep, and, after sleeping twenty-four hours, awakes, grumbles a little, and then turns over on his other side and sleeps another twenty-four.

Increased mental stamina undoubtedly accrued to the Southern negro from race intermixture, in spite of the sinister circumstances under which race intermixture went on. Owing however, to the mutual reserve, to which we have just alluded, this benefit is fast disappearing. Everywhere at the South, except in cities where, for obvious reasons, sexual commerce between whites and blacks is not followed by the same social penalties, the negro is unmistakably breeding back to the original African physiognomy, and, unless this process of retroversion is checked, the event must be most disastrous to the average intelligence of the black race.

Worse still. Not only has the new regime unsettled the negro in all his economic relations by withdrawing him from the dominion of the authority that in some form or other is

indispensable to his economic value, not only has it imparted superadded energy to his reactionary tendencies by isolating him from every kind of refining contact with the white race and throwing him back upon his primordial type, but as a further effect of his emancipation from authority and the habits of subjection that authority created, it has stimulated his grosser nature into full activity. Without the exaggeration of local pride, it may be said that the simile of Lucas in the verses so dear to every Southern heart, "as violets our virgins pure and tender," simply expresses in a poetic form the deep-seated deference for womanhood, that only less than the virtue of its objects, renders crimes against female chastity exceptionally rare at the South among the whites. Yet, surely, of all contradictions, it is one of the most ghastly, that in this very community a white woman does not dare to leave unattended the curtilage of her house for fear that the libidinous hand of a bestial savage may be laid upon her. If a negro is killed in a brawl, there are always Jacobins, like Senator Chandler, drunk with the wild riot of their own evil passions, to stigmatise the entire Southern people as murderers. Yet there is not one of these men who does not know, silent as they are on the subject, that scarcely is a morning newspaper laid upon a breakfast table in the Union that does not narrate a nameless outrage, all but peculiar to the negro, followed, it is true, invariably, by the keen and swift vengeance that, under the sense of a stringent necessity, however mistaken, has almost supplanted legal procedure in such cases but too often perpetrated under circumstances of sickening atrocity. This subject is one from which even the cold eye of philosophical disquisition shrinks, but nothing better illustrates than offences of this sort, sternly redressed as they are, not only what a thoughtless thrall to his momentary appetites the negro is, but how much the difficulty of dealing with him is likely to increase as years go on.

So much for one of the two antagonistic races. Should sectional passion and party lust succeed in placing the destinies

of the South under the control of this race, while it remains what it is at this hour, then well might the Southern people exclaim, with a profounder significance than the poet ever dreamed :

"Black is the badge of hell,
The hue of dungeons, and the scowl of night!"

And what of the other race? There is no need of a detailed comparison. It is enough to say that it is in substance the Anglo-Saxon race, the race that has asserted its inborn dignity and power under every constellation of the heavens, and, in the sublime language of Edmund Waller, has trod with a steady foot even upon the billows of the sea; the race of reformed religion and its purified altars; the race of home and its sweet, tranquil joys; the race of representative institutions and constitutional restraints; the race of colonization and battle; the race of letters, invention, industry and commerce; the one race that has proved itself capable of reducing human infirmity to the wedded sway of liberty and law.

In England, it has produced Shakespeare and Milton, Marlborough and Wellington, Pitt and Gladstone, Arkwright and Stevenson. In the Northern States of the Union, it has produced Emerson and Hawthorne, Grant and McClellan, Franklin and Webster, Morse and Edison. And it is no idle vaunt to say that Washington, Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Henry, Jefferson, Madison, Marshall, Calhoun, Davis and the people and the civilization, of which they were the flower, will for all time attest that the blood of this race has lost none of its energy, when, mixed with a smaller infusion of foreign elements than anywhere else in the United States, it starts out on its circuit from the Southern heart.

These are the two races that constitute the population of the South. It is important to bear in mind that they are not simply distinguished from each other by vivid contrasts, physical, moral and intellectual, but are jealously divided from each other in all the personal relations of life by a relentless

caste, founded upon the contrasts. This is true even of the North, although nowhere in that section is the negro sufficient in numbers to be a source of immediate political danger, or to make the friction of his presence generally felt in the ordinary round of daily existence. If it were not so, why is it that the negro manifests such a strange reluctance about crossing Mason and Dixon's line—only a few hours away—and taking up his residence in communities where the old barriers of dislike and disqualification have long ago been torn down? No one needs an answer to this question who subscribes to a Northern newspaper, let alone all other sources of popular knowledge. It is because the negro has learnt for himself what prominent representatives of his race have publicly declared again and again, that he does not escape race bias by going Northwards, and that, if the instinctive disfavor of the whites there is not displayed towards him in all the various phases that it is at the South, or so quickly under provocation as it is at the South, it is because the spaces between his elbows and theirs are wider, and he is too weak, numerically, to be a menace to order and property. All the same the disfavor exists, deep seated, intuitive, ready at any moment to break out into angry inflammation. Northern legislatures do not pass laws requiring separate coaches for white and black passengers on railroad trains. What Southern State would do it, if a white man could board a train within its borders and find a negro face here and there only to invite his listless curiosity? Northern legislatures do not pass laws against miscegenation. What Southern State would do it if it knew that, even though race repellency were to cease and the two races were to attract each other, it could swallow down its black infusion like a dose of nauseous medicine at a single gulp and with a single wry face? It is not until diseases of the body politic are felt or apprehended throughout its entire sensitive area that the *vis medicatrix legum* is invoked. So long as fond theories of human relationship, potently seductive in all their Utopian forms to human opti-

mism, can be preserved with impunity in any event, however remote, there is not likely to be a call for the political physician. But it is unquestionably true that the negro at the North is exposed to a race proscription differing only in kind and degree from that to which he is exposed at the South. As long ago as 1880 there were nearly a half million of negroes residing in the Northern States. In some of these States they and their increase now hold the balance of political power. How comes it, then, we may ask the sublime moralists of the Senate chamber, who so generously maintain that God made of one blood all nations of men except the Mongolian, that no one of these negroes is ever sent to Congress by a Northern constituency? How many negro governors, members of State legislatures, mayors, aldermen, judges, prosecuting attorneys, sheriffs, court clerks, bank presidents, railroad presidents, book-keepers, or railroad conductors are there in the Northern States? When the Postmaster General concludes that the race is entitled to a few scattered post-offices, is it from the eager North that the post-offices are selected, or is it from the reluctant South? Why is it that when even so talented a negro as Frederick Douglass who, curiously enough, in the estimation of Senator Ingalls, is "greater by his Caucasian reinforcement than by his African blood," is to be provided for, he is given either an office in a disfranchised community in the United States or a mission to a black Republic? How much are negro lawyers and doctors at the North patronized by white clients or patients? Are blacks freely admitted there to the various social and religious organizations that effect so much for this world and the next? Do they not sometimes complain that, cosmopolitan as is the city of New York, it is almost impossible for them to rent houses in that city outside of a *cul de sac* or some forbidding thoroughfare. Indeed, have not even colored clergymen been heard to allege that New Jersey hotels, usually so covetous of guests, become as secluded as nunneries when they present themselves at the door, gripsack in hand. Black policemen and firemen are not

unknown in Southern cities. How many are there in Northern? It is a common thing for Southern whites to work side by side with the negro in the cotton and tobacco fields. How is this companionship relished when a Pittsburgh manufacturer undertakes to introduce blacks into his rolling mill? These and a thousand other questions of like character might be put, and there is not one of them that can be honestly answered without sustaining the truth of what we have said with reference to the existence of race prejudice at the North.

What is true, however, of the North is, of course, still more strikingly true of the South, for all the conditions favorable to race prejudice are in the South actively, incessantly and ubiquitously at work. There the line of the division runs with terrible distinctness through the entire organization of society. Intermarriage is universally or all but universally inhibited by constitutional or statutory provisions, and, if it were under no legal ban, would be as effectively inhibited by custom. Sexual intercourse between a negro man and a white woman, against the will of the latter, is avenged by the surest, the fleetest and the most absolutely pitiless nemesis that ever silently and irresistibly sped to its mark. Sexual intercourse between a negro man and a white woman, with the consent of the latter, is as rare as buggery and when it does occur awakens very much the same sensations in the superior race as that unnatural crime. A negro never enters the house of a white person except as a menial. A white person never enters the house of a negro except on an errand of business, mercy or charity. Errands of the latter two descriptions were common enough while slavery lasted, and are still occasionally prompted by ties then formed, but they are becoming fewer and fewer as death severs the ligaments of the past and the chasm between the rising generations of the two races steadily widens. Justly or unjustly too, as at the North, the white race has settled down to the conviction that the negro is unfitted for any but the ruder vocations, and, if he transcends the limits of these vocations, he must expect to secure his

patronage solely from his own people. Go into a public schoolhouse where white children or white youths are taught, and there is not a black face there. Go a few blocks or a few miles further into a public schoolhouse where black children or black youths are taught, and there is not a white face there, unless it be that of the teacher, and the black race is not more anxious than the white to everywhere displace him with a black substitute. Enter a church of the one or the other race and the same phenomenon greets the gaze. The galleries in the churches of the whites, which were once set aside for the blacks, have long ago been abandoned by them to cobwebs and dirt daubers. If a white person enters a church of the blacks, when the strident voice of the preacher is floating out over the fields, and the old men are groaning and rocking their bodies to relieve their repressed emotions, and the women are shrieking and swooning like pythonesses, and all the other concomitants of the nervous disorder, that passes on such occasions for religion, are fully developed, the sudden lull in the excitement and sidelong glances will easily enable him to judge how far he is wanted. At the country store, the railroad station, and the voting precinct, the blacks gather in one group and the whites in another, set over against each other like two warring chemical elements that may at any moment unite in an explosion. At the voting precinct, of course, the antithesis is most glaring. To one side of the ballot box stands the mass of black voters, sullen or light-hearted, accordingly as the last flaw of their mercurial temperament blows them about, demanding in silence more expressive than any words that the human lips ever syllabled the money or the civil institutions of the rival race. To the other stands the mass of white voters, firm, self-centred, tense as the single cool man that walks with a cocked pistol in one hand and his life in the other. And so with every other point of proximity between the two races, for there is no contact but collision. In some of the Southern States, if a negro purchases a railroad ticket, he must find a seat in the cars or compartments

reserved for him. In others, where, for reasons, in nowise suggested by relaxing prejudice, he is not under this necessity, unless he desires to gratify race enmity, he instinctively seeks the side of another negro. Theatres and hotels are practically closed to him. Let him enter a circus, the one place of amusement, to which he is addicted in common with the whites, and the tier after tier of unrelieved black countenances, ascending to the roof of the tent, opposite to the tier after tier of unrelieved white, tells him that an unrelenting law of the human heart has fixed his place. Occupying the same soil, sustaining to each other usually the relation of employer and employee, or of landlord and tenant, nearly equal in numbers, dreadfully unequal in intelligence and morale, the two races are as far removed from each other in sympathy and mutual interest as if they were inhabitants of different countries. And mark how radical and invincible the antagonism is. That the race line should be thus drawn, it is not necessary that the negro should be a full-blooded black, or even closely approximate that character. *Partus sequitur ventrem* alike applies to him whether he is an unmitigated African or has just enough African blood in his veins to crisp his hair or to lend a faint saffron tint to his cheek. In either event there is between him and the white race a great gulf cast. The mulatto may formulate, and does formulate his distinctions too, but they receive no recognition on his paternal side.

And it is but sober truth to assert that the caste underlying this state of things has simply been confirmed by the abrupt elevation of the negro to citizenship. If the negro had merely been manumitted, and had then been exclusively turned over to the wisdom and justice of the Southern whites, he would most assuredly have been the victim of temporary oppression. The transmitted ideas of the slave era, the bitterness of the recent struggle, the character of the negro himself, would have rendered any other result impossible. But if the Southern whites had come to the conclusion that the negro was destined to be a permanent element in their corporate life,

they would as the reconciliation of the sections advanced, and the appeal to their generosity and fairness became stronger and stronger, have devised a *modus vivendi* between the races that would have been the offspring of their own free will and experience, and would therefore have afforded a solid and stable earnest of liberal modifications as the negro indicated his title to them. Forever barred from a return to slavery by a change in the organic law of the land, convinced from their own observation that it was better even for themselves that the negro should be a freeman than a slave, compelled by the necessities of their position, *maugré* every backward leaning, to deal wisely and justly with him, their own enlightened self-interest, animated by the clear-sighted and conservative spirit of local self-government would have slowly accorded to the negro every privilege that he deserved. In this way the excesses of the Reconstruction period, and its frightful admonitions, so destructive of all confidence in the negro as a citizen and a voter, might have been avoided. Fate, however, decreed otherwise. By three or four tremendous strokes of the pen, partly directed by genuine humanitarianism and honest zeal for abstract rights, and partly by a disinterested purpose to harmonize the new conditions at the South with what was thoughtfully believed at the time to be for the best interests of the whole Republic, but far more by the passionate suggestions of the late conflict, the slave was, through the entirely external instrumentality of a conqueror, made in every outward respect the political co-equal of his recent master; an act so utterly inconsistent with every principle of practical statesmanship and so obviously but the refinement of a constitutional age upon the old sequels of subjugation, that the Southern people had little resentment to expend upon the subsequent attempts of the National Legislature to make the same slave their social co-equal as well.

Thus conferred, the political equality of the negro has served only to intensify his social inequality. Pinned upon the white race by an extraneous power, utterly without regard to their

wishes, they could not but feel that it was little else than another badge of conquest, all the more hateful because not affixed by the mailed hand of the warrior but by the sleek attorney hand of legislative oppression, guided by the cool, calculating machinations of the committee room. The consequence is that finding themselves debarred from denying one form of equality beyond their control, they have all the more jealously denied others within their control. What the negro has gained in political privileges, he has lost twice over in social. The freer his access to the polls, the more difficult has become his access to all the human relations that law cannot reach. In the normal progress of a despised race, the political standing always precedes the social, but whatever hopes of social advancement the negro might have justly based upon a citizenship, conceded by the people with whom his lot was cast, after he had demonstrated his right to it, he cannot well base such hopes upon a citizenship granted him by the arbitrary fiat of a third party at a time when he could not, as he did not, fail to exhibit as slight credentials to political as to social preferment.

Nor should the reader forget here that the race prejudices of the whites are heartily returned by the blacks. The white man does not more cordially despise the black man than the black man hates the white man. In Hayti, no white person can own an inch of soil or indeed obtain any footing but that of bare toleration. In the same island, Sir Spenser St. John once heard a negro advocate pleading before a black jury defend a member of his race, who had murdered a white, on the ground that it was only one white the less. So at the South there are abundant evidences that if the negro but had the power he would not lack the proscriptive spirit. Every year of the Reconstruction Era saw him more impatient of white leadership and more disposed to take the reins into his own hands. On the eve of an important election, it is a common habit in parts of the South for negroes to assemble in the recesses of the forest at night for the purpose of giving expression to sentiments and aims, so congenial with the hour and

place that they are still reflected in the morose faces and averted eyes that are noted by the planter or overseer the next day. An ordinary arrest in a negro quarter in a Southern City, even for a crime committed within the view of the officers, often brings the whole vicinage about his ears. As a rule, of course, the animus is revealed only in the covert and indirect forms, characteristic of acknowledged inferiority, for the negro knows that the blood runs near the skin of the white race, and as yet he cannot altogether shake off the spell of the conscious mastery that is familiar with every weak spot in his moral and mental constitution, and that responds with a ready rebuke to every encroachment upon its reservations. Still, as he recedes further and further from under the direct influence of the whites, his port becomes more and more aggressive. Now he will content himself with visiting social ostracism or even corporeal injury upon the black, who has had the courage, when race feeling was running high, to vote the Democratic ticket. But then again, on another occasion, when separate tables of the same quality have been provided for the two races by a Steamboat Company, some "Afro-American" will clamorously insist upon eating with the white passengers. Again the same heady presumption will induce a negress to throw herself down with a defiant gesture into a vacant place in a railroad car beside an unprotected white female. Again, on still another occasion, when a considerable party of negroes are in possession of a street car, and one or more ladies are standing, the men will effect a careless ease in retaining their seats, and the women will indulge in ostentatious chatter, that leaves little doubt as to the person for whom it is intended. The same uneasy sense of inferiority leads the negro to significantly abjure Christian names and to interlard his conversation with the prefixes of the post-office and the visiting card.

Pretensions like these the white race might well dismiss with a shrug or a laugh. Unfortunately, however, race antagonism assumes far more threatening aspects. An examination of the back files of any daily newspaper for the last

year will corroborate the statement that there is scarcely a Southern State which has not, during that time, been the scene of a race conflict, involving more or less bloodshed. It is impossible to read the history of any of these conflicts, which usually originate in trivial causes, without forming the most painful impressions as to the inflammability of the moral atmosphere that kindles them. The service of a writ, some real or fancied act of individual injustice, some casual broil between two members of the opposing races, is at any moment sufficient to start a blaze that does not expire until the stronger race has inflicted the exemplary measure of retaliation that is essential to the continuance of its prestige and dominion. Already collisions like these are constantly occurring, and it is a melancholy reflection that the immediate future is far more likely to augment than to diminish them. The astonishing fecundity of the negro which is fast giving him, if the census of 1880 may be believed, a numerical preponderance over the whites in many of the Southern States, and other causes, upon which we have already touched, make this only too probable.

In the meantime, there is not a nerve in the happiness or prosperity of the South that does not feel the festering touch of the conditions upon which we have been dwelling. As a slave, the negro exercised a very pernicious effect on her material welfare by confining within the narrowest limits feverish energies, that might under different auspices have been directed into various channels of peaceful activity. The centre of gravity to which all her interests had to be adjusted, the shuttlecock of sectional rivalries, the vortex of every storm, lowly and ignoble as he was, he unwittingly had his revenge in the morbid extent to which he monopolized her attention. One consequence of this concentration of public attention upon the negro was, of course, to impart an extraordinary unity and intensity of purpose to the Southern people, that disseminated political information far and wide, bred a remarkable aptitude for public affairs, and, through its unnatural momentum, prolonged

the political ascendancy of the South beyond the normal term prescribed by the expanding population and wealth of the North. But these advantages were dearly purchased at the price that the South was all the time paying for them in the corresponding neglect of her material resources and the sectional animosities that contentions over the negro implanted.

Though the negro is no longer a passive, but an active factor in political movements at the South, he is still the creaking and heated pivot upon which all such movements turn. No one who has not lived in what is known there as a black belt can realize how far the thoughts and conversation of the people are colored by the suggestions of his presence. His ominous shadow falls athwart every lintel and lends a sombre tint to every ray of reviving prosperity. How is this alien, unassimilable, ignorant, immoral, thriftless, corrupt mass of voters, darkening the face of the South like the overhanging skirts of a nimbus cloud, to be illuminated or dispelled? These questions address themselves every day and hour to every reflective man and woman at the South. And they are questions to which the efforts that she has made on behalf of the negro since the war return no answer. Out of her impoverished resources, she has heroically supplied the negro as freely as she could with educational and benevolent aid, and yet what compensation has there been for her generosity and self-denying sense of duty? Not only have they produced no sensible improvement in the moral and intellectual condition of the negro, but apparently they have not awakened in him a solitary sensation of gratitude. As ready as before to lift his hand against the only hand that can extend him assistance, which will prove a blessing instead of a curse to him, as prompt as ever to league himself with every desperate crusade against the banded intelligence and property of the community with which his fortunes are bound up, and to submit his feet to the lead of every drunken Trinculo or Stephano that comes along with cozening dreams of wild license, it is not strange that the white race is growing sick and tired of him and is resolved

that, if there is to be a struggle for race supremacy, it will prosecute that struggle with its usual degree of unflinching firmness and spirit. From the cruellest experience it has learnt to know that whatever assails the honor or the safety of the South, whether it be an attempt to stain the financial credit of Virginia, or to impose a debauching lottery upon Louisiana, or some other nefarious scheme, concocted by the most depraved whites, is simply regarded by him as affording him another opportunity to divide the white race and to feed his resentments upon their weakness and abasement.

In spite of the results, precipitated by the Constitutional Amendments, if the negro were not constantly the victim of outside interference, the process of segregation, that is now completely separating him from the white race, might yet be arrested, and reversed tendencies produce more harmonious relations between him and the latter. Thrown entirely upon his own expedients, he might be intelligent enough to see that the only wise and certain way of dissolving the solid opposition of the whites was by according to them the full portion of deference, that is due to their better opportunities in the past, if nothing else, recognizing the mutual dependence of the two races under existing circumstances, and exercising the franchise upon some other principle than mere race rancor. Such a policy as this perhaps presupposes a far greater amount of sagacious patience and foresight than belongs to the negro. If this be so, at any rate, however, in the event suggested, he would soon reconcile himself to the conviction that there resided in the will and directing intellect of the white race an indomitable power of self-assertion that, no matter what might be his numbers or paper rights, he could never hope to break down by blind impact merely. With the formation of this conviction, the mass of the race would sink into a political apathy even deeper than that which has already been occasioned in many parts of the South by his observation that, whether the President of the United States be a Republican or a Democrat, his personal liberty is secure, the wearing off of the first

novelty of the ballot, and his repeated political reverses. How probable this is the increased lethargy, that followed the recent success of the great national party, that is identified in the mind of the negro with white rule at the South, clearly discloses. In either case, the negro would gain, for in either case the prejudices and apprehensions of the whites would abate. Party dissensions would spring up among them. The interests and ambitions, engendered by these dissensions, would hatch competition for the negro vote, and enable the negro to play off one party against the other by holding out his support to the one that promised him the most liberal treatment. In this way, personal and political ties would be created between him and the white race that would tend to stay their present estrangement, promote mutual friendliness and confidence between them, and clear his pathway of every artificial obstruction that blocks his progress towards the acquisition of the external advantages that secure consideration and respect. Relieved from the fear of negro domination, the whites would be more generous, more just, more forbearing. Taught to look entirely to himself and to the whites at his own doors for the amelioration of his condition, the negro would be less presumptuous, less hostile to the other race, and more disposed to substitute the claims of solid attainment for the claims of empty mimicry. Concession would follow concession, each one leading naturally to the next because the preceding one was a normal stage in an orderly and logical progression. Admitting that the negro is capable of substantial and lasting improvement, and that the white man and he could occupy in amity the same territory under circumstances that did not absolutely guarantee the political ascendancy and the race integrity of the former, it is certain that only under the circumstances just described could the negro ever insert the entering wedge of social and real political equality.

But it is just outside interference that the negro always has invited, and to all appearances always will invite, so long as the population of the South continues to be dual as it is

to-day. He has not been the active and efficient auxiliary in curtailing the political strength of his former masters that he was expected by the Republican party to be when it made him a citizen. On the contrary, all history does not furnish a more signal example of the utter fatuity of expectations, based upon *a priori* inferences, than is to be found in the manner in which his former masters have vindicated in his person the claims of violated nature over the subtlest and most complex contrivances of law. Constitutional amendments, elaborate systems of statutory equality, the military force of the nation have all at one time or another been called in for the purpose of standing the cone upon its apex and making the law of gravitation operate upwards instead of downwards. But not more impotent to restrain the waves of the Hellespont were the chains of Xerxes than were these agencies to produce a real equality between the former master and the former slave, and to transfer to ignorance and barbarism and landlessness the same share of influence that naturally and rightfully attaches to intelligence and civilization, and property. Though every governmental function was in the hands of the blacks, though the ballot box was beset with serried masses of federal bayonets, though the dejection of defeat and disfranchisement and of humiliations worse than either was still strong, the white people of the South reclaimed the supremacy that belonged to them with a facility that can only be compared to the facility with which the rising tide reclaims the deserted margin of the sea. Restored to the full control of their State governments, represented in Congress almost exclusively by persons of their own choice, they might not unnaturally bestow a bitter laugh upon the miscarriage of the policy that was intended to exact an opprobrious and perpetual security for their bondage, if they did not feel that, whether negro suffrage abridges or doubles their political power, it is in either event an affliction and a mockery.

It might have been supposed that the inability of the Republican party, demonstrated over and over again, to prop up the

negro in such a way as to qualify him to cope on equal terms with the white man would have induced it to let race relations at the South alone. It is needless, however, to say that this is not so. It is true that a marked change has taken place in the attitude of Northern sentiment towards the negro, due to the subsidence of sectional passions, the futility of past efforts to compound the white and black races at the South into one homogeneous whole by forced processes, the sense of common danger, inspired by the insoluble communities of Chinese and other undesirable immigrants in the heart of the West and North, the growing conviction, based upon forfeited opportunities, that the negro is a *mauvais sujet*, who claims a larger share of the national attention and patience than he deserves, and the closer personal and commercial ties between the two sections that are being woven by the mighty industrial movement that has arisen at the South and is absorbing so much Northern capital and energy. Nothing can be more certain than that, in the ratio, in which the negro gained by the estrangement of the North and the South, he will lose by their reconciliation. It is also true that the change mentioned has already been so decided that the day has passed when the South could be singled out as a distinct target for oppressive legislation, designed to promote the interests of the Republican party, and that such legislation must now, ostensibly at least, apply to the other sections of the Union. We want no better proof of this than the insidious force bill, pending in Congress, which proposes to transfer the control of national elections from the hands, which have held it since the adoption of the Federal Constitution, into hands, that are expected to make one more effort to put the heel of the black race on the neck of the white. And this fact is one of incalculable value to the South. It converts every undue stretch of federal authority into a common bond of sympathy between her and the rest of the Union. It hastens the end of the political isolation that is alike distasteful to her cordial instincts and inimical to her selfish interests.

Nevertheless, the disposition of the Republican party to intermeddle with the domestic affairs of the South is still so alert that its success invariably fills the minds of her people with the gloomiest forebodings of political persecution and social discord. Whatever it may hereafter become, with the decadence of sectional jealousies and the adoption of more conservative counsels, it is at present hopelessly sectional in its organization and purposes. Forever cheated by the tempting solicitations of an immense vote, captivately available in point of theory and cruelly illusory in point of fact, saturated with traditional prejudices, that are untiring in devising new means for harrowing the tranquillity of the South, the Southern people would be more than human if they did not set their faces like flint against its invasions.

Most lamentable for every reason are the consequences of this intermeddling. Lamentable to the negro, because, when the Republican party is in power, he not only remains a negro but becomes the supple instrument of centralizing encroachments upon local autonomy, and, therefore, proportionably the more obnoxious to the white race; lamentable to the white race, because Republican rule plants a Dublin Castle in the South, elevates to the local federal offices the most ignorant and irresponsible members of her population, damps hope, disorders industry, involves every Southern State in anxiety and turmoil, and distils blistering dews upon every olive branch that the one section holds out to the other. No better evidence of these facts can be found than in the improved race relations, sectional good feeling, and marvelous quickening of every industrial impulse that ensued at the South upon the election of President Cleveland.

Hence, the solid South, the conspicuous phenomenon that has so unjustly, and yet so artfully, been used to convince the honest and unprejudiced masses of the North that the Southern people are unreconciled to the results of the war and full of smouldering hostility to the general government. Analyzed, it is found to be merely the mode in which the fear of negro

domination, established by external intervention, has organized itself. If there were no negroes at the South, and the Republican party were to adjust its necessities to that fact, as it would then, despite every lingering incentive of the past, unquestionably soon do, the white race would, in the briefest period, split up into party divisions along the same general lines as the North. The clashing of individual ambitions, and the natural diversity of human antipathies and convictions would, in any event, guarantee that. But an additional guarantee for it would be found in the infant industries, that are leading thousands of Southern Democrats to look with favor upon the tenet of protection, that is so pertinaciously cherished by the Republican party. As it is, however, protection to factory chimneys is but a small matter compared with protection to domestic hearthsides. How deeply the Southern people appreciate this is exhibited in the solidity just mentioned that resists with the tensile strength of steel every centrifugal influence, however urgent. It is a most painful fact that the South is compelled by her negro problem to sternly deny herself all the great benefits that flow from party strife and the agitation of party issues. No matter how variant are the views of her people upon the questions of public policy that keep the rest of the Union in a state of healthful dissension, she must, at any cost, dress every break in her alignment in the face of the overshadowing issue that is with her the very issue of life and death. There are no parties at the South but the white man's party and the black man's party. There is no issue but the race issue. Even the electoral and administrative reforms, that sweep from time to time over the rest of the country, must be carefully weighed by her with reference to their probable effect in affording a freer scope to the dangers that lurk in the ignorance and race temper of her black population. Often, from considerations of this sort, she is constrained to reject such reforms because they do not comport with the exigencies of her peculiar situation, when, if she were unhampered, she would be one of the first sections of the Union to adopt them.

Such in faint outline are the conditions that surround the Negro Problem. It seems to us that to barely state them ought to be sufficient to expose the fatuous impolicy, not to say wickedness, of any further attempt upon the part of the federal government to modify them by coercive legislation. Upon some other occasion, we propose to consider the remedies that they call for.

W. CABELL BRUCE.



